

Chapter 4

Dimension of Disability in India

4.1 Estimates of Disabled Persons

The official estimates of disabled persons in India, obtained through the latest Population Census and National Sample Survey Organisation's comprehensive surveys on disability, put the figure as about 21 million (roughly around 2 percent of the population) at the beginning of the new millennium. However, estimates vary across sources and a new World Bank Report¹ on disabled persons in India, has observed that 'there is growing evidence that people with disabilities comprise between 5 and 8 per cent of the Indian population (around 55 – 90 million individuals).

There is a common concern that disabled persons are among the most excluded ones in the development process of the country. For an effective and efficient policy intervention to improve the lots of the disabled persons, it is of utmost importance to get a clear idea of the dimension of disability in India. Although government and the public sector would have to play a key role in this endeavour, it may be neither feasible, nor desirable for them to do it all. Further, there is wide heterogeneity in the situation and the policy requirements of different groups of disabled persons in India. There are major differences in social attitudes to different types of disability, coupled with variations due to gender, class, place of residence (rural / urban) etc.

Population Census and NSS surveys are the major two sources of official statistics in India. But the two differ substantially in respect of overall estimates of persons with various types of disability and their composition, mainly due to differences in the concepts and definitions as also the data collection methodologies. Therefore in this section dimension of disability reflected by these two sources would be taken up separately.

A. Findings of Population Census

In recent years a question on disability was canvassed during the House listing Operations of 1981 Census where there was considerable under enumeration of physically handicapped persons. The 1991 Population Census did not cover disability. Again in Census 2001, question on disability was included for all the members of the households at the time of detail population enumeration. The findings of latest Population Census of 2001 on disability have been discussed here in detail with a brief mention of the observations based on 1981 Census, although the two sets of results were not quite comparable.

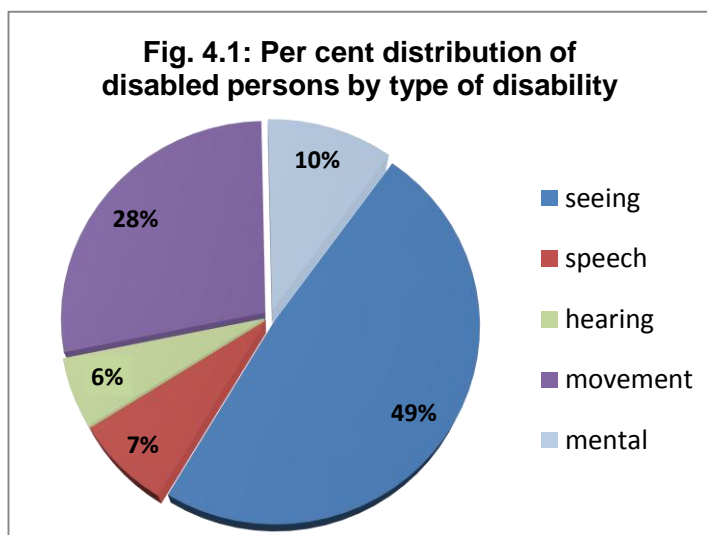
¹ *People with Disabilities in India: From Commitments to Outcomes*, by Human Development Unit, South Asia Region, The World Bank.

4.2 Number of Disabled Persons and their composition: Census 2001

Population Category	Total disabled persons (no. in thousand)	% of disabled in total population	% distribution of disabled persons by type of disability				
			seeing	speech	hearing	movement	mental
Total	21907	2.13	49	7	6	28	10
Rural	16388	2.21	48	8	6	28	10
Urban	5518	1.93	50	7	4	26	12
Male	12606	2.37	46	8	5	31	11
Female	9301	1.87	53	8	6	24	10
SC	3711	2.23	49	7	6	29	9
ST	1618	1.92	50	8	8	26	8

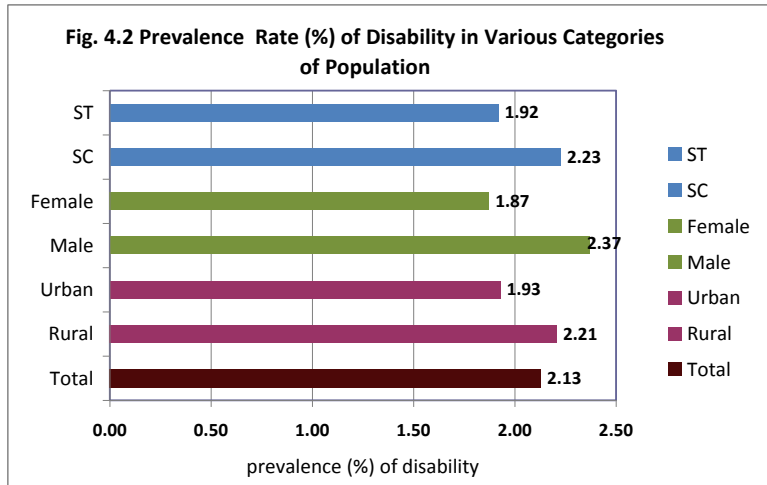
Source: Population Census (2001).

In the year 2001, of the persons with disability (PWD) about 75% belonged to rural areas and only 25% were from urban areas. About 58% of disabled were males while only 42% were females. For the population of the country as a whole, 2.13% were found to have one type of disability or the other.

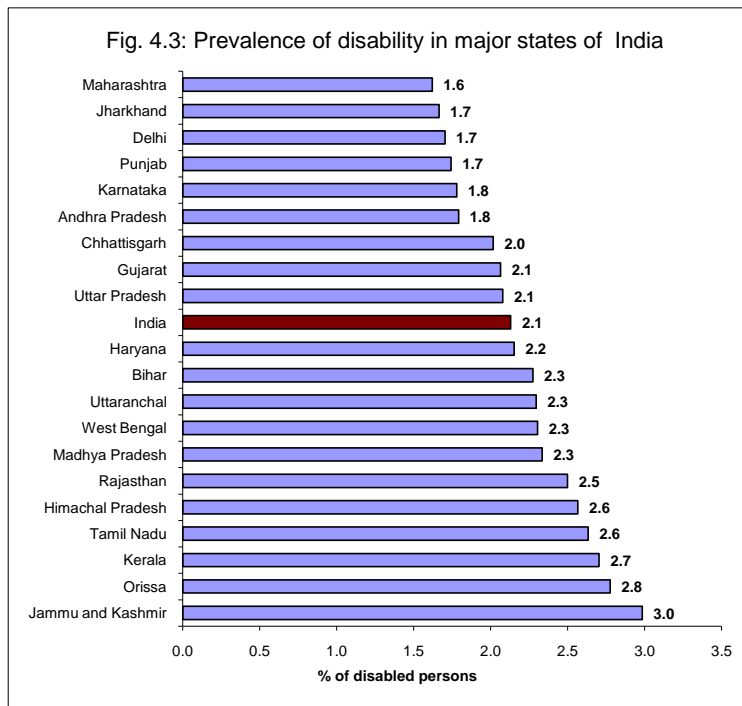


As per Census (2001) findings, where not more than one type of disability was recorded for each PWD, about half of them were found to have visual disability, more than a-fourth had movement disability, about 10% were having mental disability, 7% had speech disability and 6% were with hearing disability. The proportions vary marginally across different sets of population categories. Although the overall estimates of total number of PWD obtained through NSS survey (2002) were not wide off the mark, there were significant variations from Population Census findings with respect to their composition by type of disability.

4.3 Prevalence of disability: Census 2001



In rural India, the prevalence of disability was much higher (2.21%) as compared to that in its urban counterpart (1.93%). Again, among males, the prevalence of disability (2.37%) was significantly higher than that among females (1.87%). The prevalence rate among SC population (2.23%) was marginally higher as compared to the general population; while among ST population, it was noticeably lower (1.92%).



Among the major states of India the prevalence of disability (percentage of disabled in total population) was relatively much higher in J & K (3%), Orissa (2.8%), Kerala (2.7%), Tamil Nadu and H.P. (2.6% each) while it was quite low in Maharashtra (1.6%), Jharkhand, Punjab and Delhi (1.7% each), Karnataka & Andhra Pr.(1.8% each) etc. However, as indicated in state tables S1 and S2 in Appendix-I, if we consider all the states of the country, the prevalence of disability in state population was highest in Sikkim (3.8%). Further, in terms of numbers, about half of the disabled were located in five states, i.e. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. The number of disabled males was higher than that of disabled females in any state in general, except for the case of Tamil Nadu.

4.4 Age-Group wise disability: Census 2001

More than half of the disabled were of age less than 30 and only one-fourth of disabled persons were of age 50 or more. This is of serious concern as most of the disabled persons were found to be very young. This also strengthens the conjecture that the official disability counts might not have fully captured the functional disability incidences faced in old age. It also indicates that government policy and programmes should aim at early mainstreaming of these young persons with disability for a long-run solution to the problem.

Age-group	Total no. of PWD (in thousands)	% of disabled in each age-group for different population categories				
		Total	Rural	Urban	Male	Female
0-4	1200	5.5	5.7	4.7	5.1	6.0
5-9	2057	9.4	9.8	8.1	9.2	9.7
10-19	4475	20.4	20.3	20.9	20.8	20.0
20-29	3271	14.9	14.1	17.4	15.4	14.3
30-39	2848	13.0	12.5	14.5	13.5	12.4
40-49	2371	10.8	10.4	12.0	11.6	9.8
50-59	1838	8.4	8.4	8.5	8.6	8.1
60-69	1919	8.8	9.3	7.2	8.1	9.7
70-79	1233	5.6	6.1	4.3	5.1	6.3
80-89	476	2.2	2.4	1.6	1.9	2.6
90+	147	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.9
All age (incl. age not stated)	21907	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total no. of PWD (in thousands)		21907	16388	5518	12606	9301

Source: Population Census (2001).

In table 4.3(a), it is observed that percentage of disabled in the working age-groups of 20 – 59 years is more in urban areas than in rural areas. This may be attributed to the fact that working age people in urban areas are much more exposed to mechanized modes at workplace and in day-to-day activities compared to the rural people. The proportion of disabled in older ages (60 and above) is also found to be higher among women as compared to men.

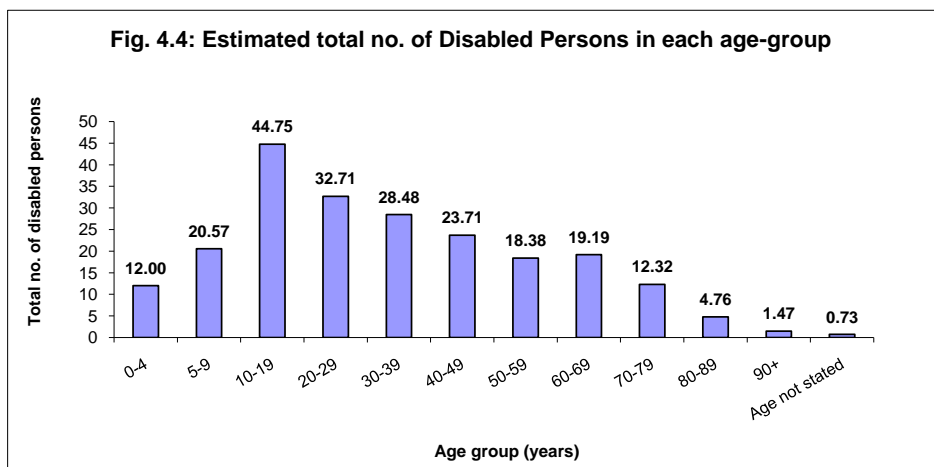


Table 4.3(b): Total Number of Disabled Persons in Different Age-Groups and their Percentage Distribution by Type of Disability

Age-group	No. of PWD (in thousands)	% distribution of disabled persons by type of disability in each age-group				
		seeing	speech	hearing	movement	mental
0-4	1200	69	3	2	20	6
5-9	2057	48	13	4	27	9
10-19	4475	40	11	4	33	12
20-29	3271	45	9	4	30	14
30-39	2848	50	8	4	25	14
40-49	2371	51	6	5	26	12
50-59	1838	51	5	8	28	9
60-69	1919	52	4	11	28	6
70-79	1233	52	3	14	27	4
80-89	476	51	2	16	27	3
90+	147	49	2	16	28	4
No. of PWD (in '000)	21907	10635	1641	1262	6106	2264

Source: Population Census (2001).

In table 4.3(b), it can be seen that in age-group 0-4 years percentage of children with visual disability were more(70%) and those with all other disabilities were much less compared to other age-groups. Proportion of PWD with hearing difficulty increased steadily in higher age-groups while movement, mental and speech disabilities were relatively more prevalent between age 5 to 39 years.

4.5 Findings from Population Census 1981

Prior to the year 2001, count of totally blind, totally crippled and totally dumb persons were attempted in the Population Census 1981. In general, out of 0.12 million population reported to be disabled, about 45% were found to be totally blind, 32% were totally crippled and 25% were totally dumb. In

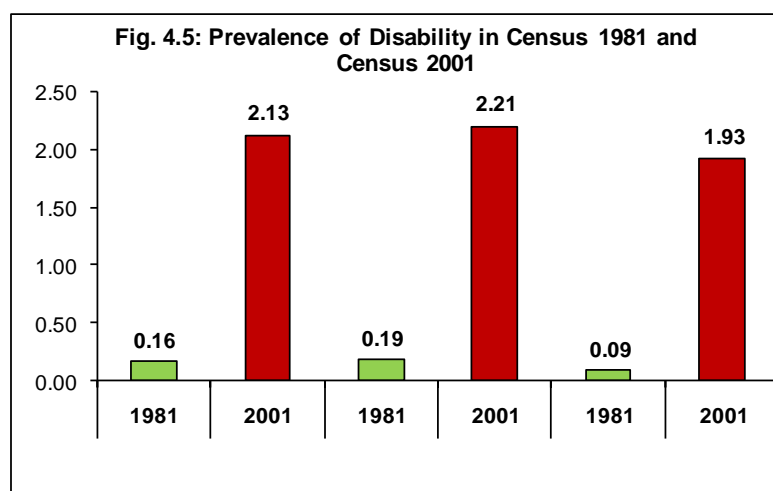
comparison to the rural areas, the percentage of totally blind persons was lesser and that of crippled persons was higher in the urban areas.

Population Category	Total no. of disabled	% distribution of disabled by type of disability		
		Totally blind	Totally crippled	Totally dumb
Total	1118948	43	32	25
Rural	969401	44	31	25
Urban	149547	36	39	24

Population Category	Total disabled	Totally blind	Totally crippled	Totally dumb
Total	0.16	0.07	0.05	0.04
Rural	0.19	0.08	0.06	0.05
Urban	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.02

Source: Population Census 1981

Only 0.16% of the total population was found to be totally disabled in India in the year 1981. The prevalence of disability was much higher in rural areas as compared to that in urban. Among the three types of severe disability, blindness was most prevalent for the population as a whole. However, in general it was felt that there has been severe under estimation of disabled persons in Census 1981.



As shown in state table S3 in Appendix-I there was a high prevalence of disability in 1981 in UP, followed by Andhra Pradesh, MP and West Bengal and low in HP, J&K and Haryana. The percentage of totally blind was higher in Rajasthan, U.P. and M.P. and the proportion of totally dumb was high in some of the north –eastern states.

B. Findings of NSSO Surveys on Disability

4.6 Size of Disabled Population : NSSO survey (2002)

National Sample Survey Organisation has been conducting comprehensive nation-wide large scale sample surveys on disability almost once in 10 years. The third and the latest survey on the disabled persons was carried out in the NSS 58th round (July-December 2002), where the coverage was extended to include mental disability also.

According to the survey estimates, in 2002, there were 18.5 million disabled persons in the country and they formed about 1.8 per cent of total population. Again out of them 10.63 per cent suffered from more than one type of the disabilities. The types of disability covered were (i) mental disability in the form of (a) mental retardation or (b) mental illness, (ii) visual disability in the form of (a) blindness or (b) low vision, (iii) hearing disability, (iv) speech disability, and (v) locomotor disability. In the case of locomotor disability, more than one type of locomotor disability was considered as multiple disabilities.

type of disability	Estimated number of disabled persons (in thousands)				
	rural	urban	male	female	all persons
mental retardation	700	295	626	369	995
mental illness	840	261	665	437	1101
Blindness	1603	410	929	1085	2013
low vision	655	159	369	444	813
hearing disability	2369	693	1613	1448	3062
speech disability	1603	552	1291	863	2155
locomotor disability	7983	2651	6634	4000	10634
any disability*	14085	4406	10891	7600	18491

Note: Estimates obtained by using survey proportions on the projected population.

** one or more of mental, visual, hearing, speech and locomotor disabilities*

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

Unlike Population Census (2001), here among the different types of disabilities, the number of persons having locomotor disability was found to be highest in both rural and urban India followed by the number of persons with hearing disability and visual disability. However, quite like Population Census, in NSS findings also, 76% of disabled persons were from rural areas and only 24% were from urban areas and 59% were males and only 41% were females.

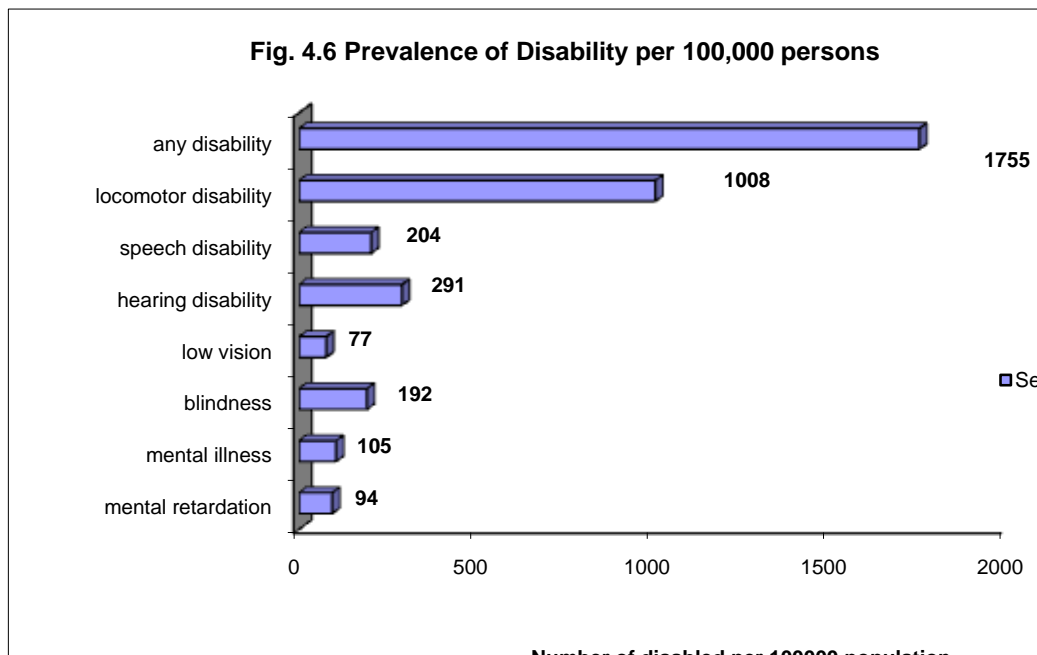
4.7 Prevalence of Disability: NSSO survey (2002)

For the population of the country as a whole, 1.8% were found to have atleast one type of disability. In rural India, the prevalence of disability was more (1.8%) as compared to its urban counterpart (1.5%). Further, among males, the proportion of disabled (2%) was significantly higher than that among females (1.5%). Locomotor disability was most prevalent (more than 1% of population), followed by hearing disability, then visual disability and lastly speech and mental disability, prevalence of each of which was

quite low (less than 0.3%). The prevalence of locomotor disability was much higher among males (1217 per 100,000 population) than among females (785 per 100,000 population). Between the two sectors, the prevalence of almost all types of disability was more in the rural sector as compared to the urban. However, identification of mental retardation was found to be more prevalent in the urban sector. Higher prevalence of disability due to blindness and low vision among women than among men, corroborates the similar findings in Census 2001. In terms of proportion this is true about hearing disability, too.

type of disability	Number of disabled persons per 1,00,000 population				
	rural	urban	male	female	All persons
mental retardation	92	100	115	72	94
mental illness	110	89	122	86	105
Blindness	210	140	171	214	192
low vision	86	54	68	87	77
hearing disability	310	236	296	285	291
speech disability	210	187	237	169	204
locomotor disability	1046	901	1217	785	1008
any disability	1846	1499	2000	1493	1755

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002



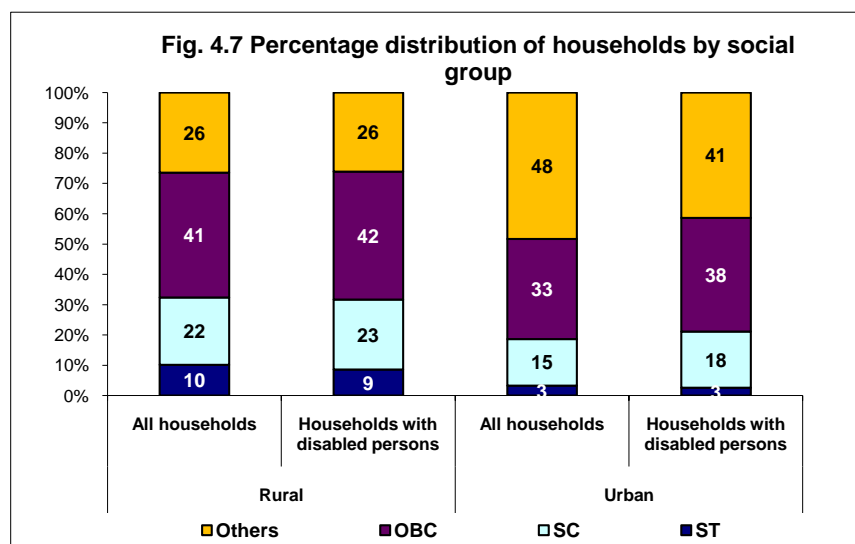
type of disability	Percentage of disabled persons for each type of disability				
	rural	urban	male	female	All persons
mental retardation	5	7	6	5	5
mental illness	6	6	6	6	6
blindness	11	9	9	14	11
low vision	5	4	3	6	4
hearing disability	17	16	15	19	17
speech disability	11	13	12	11	12
locomotor disability	57	60	61	53	57
any disability	100	100	100	100	100

Note: The total of rows do not add up to 100 since more than 10% disabled persons had multiple disabilities

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

4.8 Social Group of Disabled persons: NSSO survey (2002)

While studying the social group, it would be interesting to find out whether distribution of disabled people by social groups was different from that for the general population. In the rural areas, the distribution of social groups in general households and households reporting disability was found to be more or less same. In the urban sector, the households reporting disability had a relatively higher percentage share of SC(18%) and OBC (38%), and a relatively lower percentage in the category 'others'(41%) households in comparison to general households for which the respective percentage share of these social groups were 15%, 33% and 48%.



Among the disabled persons, 7% were ST, 22% were SC, 41% belonged to OBC and 30% were categorized as others. In the rural sector, only 26% of the disabled persons belonged to the social group 'others', whereas in the urban areas 41% disabled were from 'others'. Thus the distribution of disabled

persons by social group was markedly different between the rural and the urban sector, but there was very little differences between the two sexes as revealed in table below.

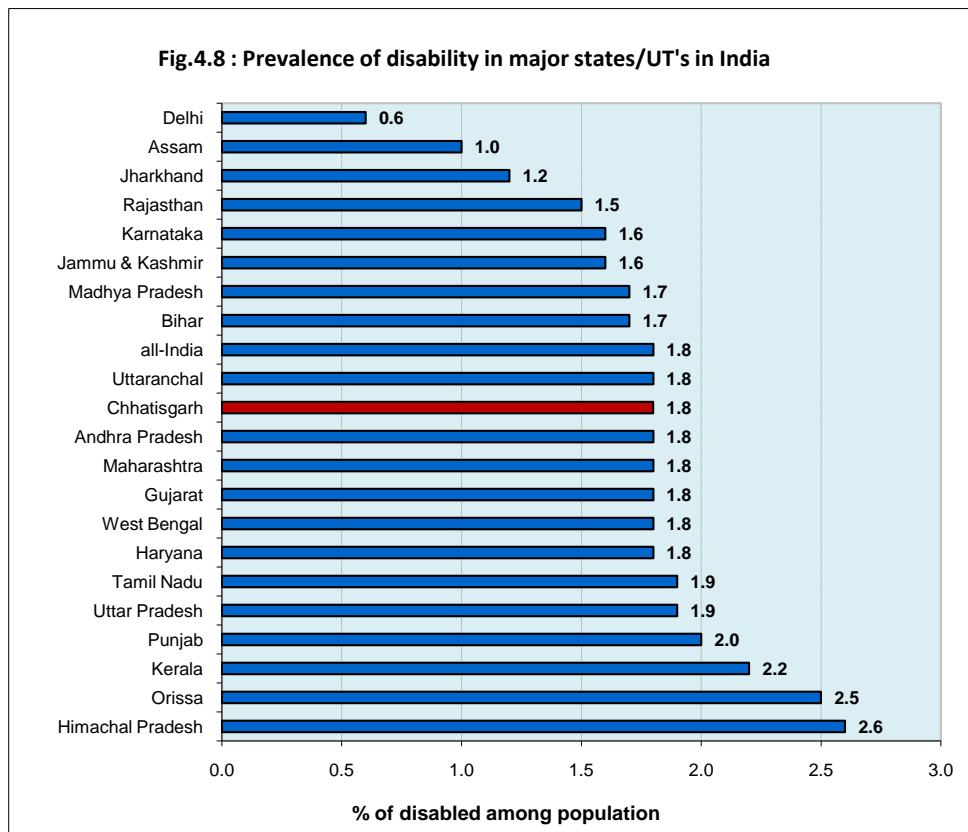
Population Category	ST	SC	OBC	Others	All
rural	8.4	23.2	42.2	26.2	100
urban	2.5	18.4	37.6	41.4	100
male	6.6	22.1	41.3	30.0	100
female	7.7	22.2	41.1	29.0	100
all persons	7.1	22.1	41.2	29.6	100

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

In all categories of population, the percentage of incidences of disability was significantly higher for OBC people as compared to the other social groups.

4.9 State-wise Prevalence: NSSO survey (2002)

In the latest NSS survey on disability, the proportion of disabled persons in the population was found to be relatively high (more than 2%) in H.P (2.6%), Orissa (2.5%), Kerala (2.2%), and Punjab (2%) while it was significantly low in Delhi (0.6%), Assam (1.0%), Jharkhand (1.2%), Rajasthan (1.5%) etc. However, in almost half of the states the prevalence was in the range of 1.7% to 1.8%.

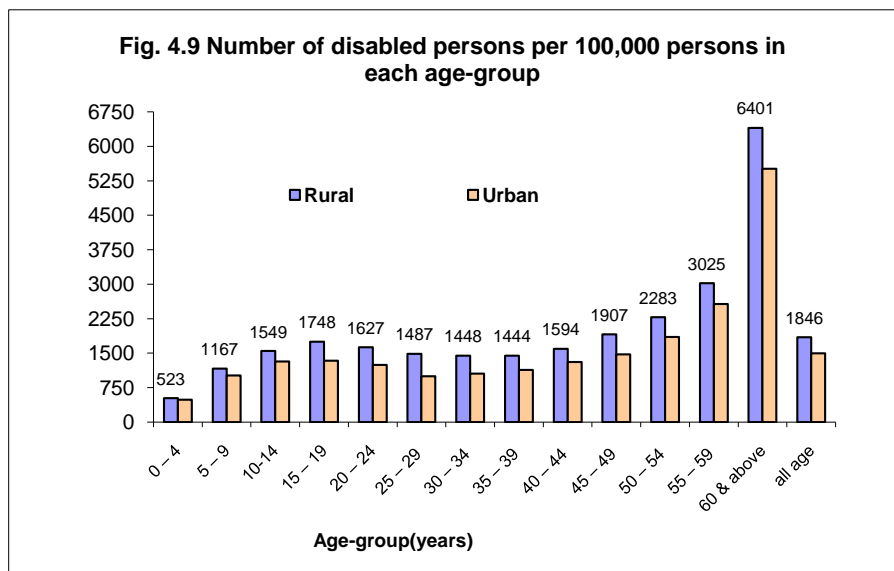


If prevalence of different types of disability in individual states can be examined as in state table S5 in Appendix-I, it can be found that among major states mental retardation was reported highest in Kerala and lowest in Assam and other small north-eastern states. Mental illness was also most prevalent in Kerala and H.P. but lowest in Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh etc. Blindness was widely prevalent in Orissa, H.P. and U.P. Low vision was high in Orissa, Kerala, H.P. and low in Jharkhand and Haryana. Hearing impairment occurred in large proportions in Sikkim, Pondicherry, H.P., Lakshadweep and much lower in Delhi, Chandigarh, Assam. Speech disability also recorded high in Sikkim, Pondicherry, Goa, Kerala and low in Delhi, Assam, Rajasthan, Punjab etc. The states possessing the largest percentage of locomotor disabled persons were Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and relatively low in many of the northeastern states and Assam. Thus, it can be seen from above that for almost all types of disability, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh had high prevalence as compared to other major states of the country while Assam and Jharkhand had it low. In Delhi prevalence of almost all the disabilities were negligible as compared to the other states of the country.

The pattern of disability prevalence in the major states as observed from NSS 2002 results were quite different from the pattern observed from Census 2001 results, which had lesser dispersion with higher central tendency as against higher dispersion and smaller central tendency for NSSO 2002 results over the major states.

4.10 Age-group wise Prevalence: NSSO survey (2002)

In general, the proportion of persons with any disability was found to be increasing steadily with age from about 500 per 100000 population for age less than 5 to more than 1700 (per 100000 population) till age 20. Thereafter it remains more or less same almost till the age 50. Thereafter, it increases rapidly with age to about 3000 for age-group 55-59 and more than 6000 after age 60 years.



In particular, as revealed in the next table, for mental illness, blindness, low vision and hearing disability there was a steady rise in the prevalence of disability with age. But for each of the age-groups, prevalence of disabilities in rural areas was invariably higher than that in urban except for mental retardation which was reported more in the urban areas.

Table 4.10: Number of disabled persons per 100,000 persons for each age-group and type of disability									
age-group (years)	type of disability								
	mental retardation	mental illness	blindness	low vision	hearing	speech	hearing & speech	loco-motor	at least one disability
rural									
0 – 4	59	12	32	5	55	129	86	334	523
5 – 9	115	32	48	12	172	297	209	716	1167
10-14	148	53	52	22	196	281	212	999	1549
15 – 19	172	91	56	21	193	243	208	1181	1748
20 – 24	141	111	65	23	200	263	245	1039	1627
25 – 29	105	155	68	17	205	207	198	895	1487
30 – 34	91	173	77	16	207	169	175	852	1448
35 – 39	64	173	75	32	235	175	156	825	1444
40 – 44	39	186	128	43	261	158	148	912	1594
45 – 49	23	172	183	65	292	137	117	1143	1907
50 – 54	23	194	266	124	453	135	139	1258	2283
55 – 59	17	178	431	234	537	136	98	1668	3025
60 & above	11	180	1733	747	1551	190	132	2796	6401
all	92	110	210	86	310	210	172	1046	1846
urban									
0 – 4	75	16	30	5	55	132	86	291	487
5 – 9	153	35	73	16	142	285	215	557	1015
10-14	165	55	82	10	209	338	326	758	1317
15 – 19	164	73	44	13	145	223	158	875	1337
20 – 24	137	92	56	18	118	175	158	819	1242
25 – 29	87	100	43	20	120	149	129	620	1000
30 – 34	86	102	30	19	134	116	101	669	1054
35 – 39	93	117	53	20	135	112	107	726	1138
40 – 44	46	141	79	30	143	118	117	868	1309
45 – 49	50	131	105	39	219	124	123	941	1476
50 – 54	25	111	182	98	213	115	67	1224	1855
55 – 59	12	131	283	122	391	132	80	1683	2571
60 & above	7	167	1087	459	1385	223	137	2888	5511
all	100	89	140	54	236	187	153	901	1499

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

The proportion of persons with mental retardation and speech disability increased with age initially and thereafter decreased gradually. Mental retardation was mostly found in ages between 10 to 20 years

while speech disability detected in large numbers among children aged 5 to 14 years. After age 60, cases of speech disability start increasing again. Almost 80% of the persons with speech disability had hearing disability as well, in both rural and urban sector. Prevalence of both forms of visual disability, i.e. blindness and low vision increased with age. Similar was the pattern of hearing disability. For loco motor disability, initially there was increase in the prevalence with age, followed by a dip in the age groups between 20 to 40 years, after which the proportion again showed an upward trend.

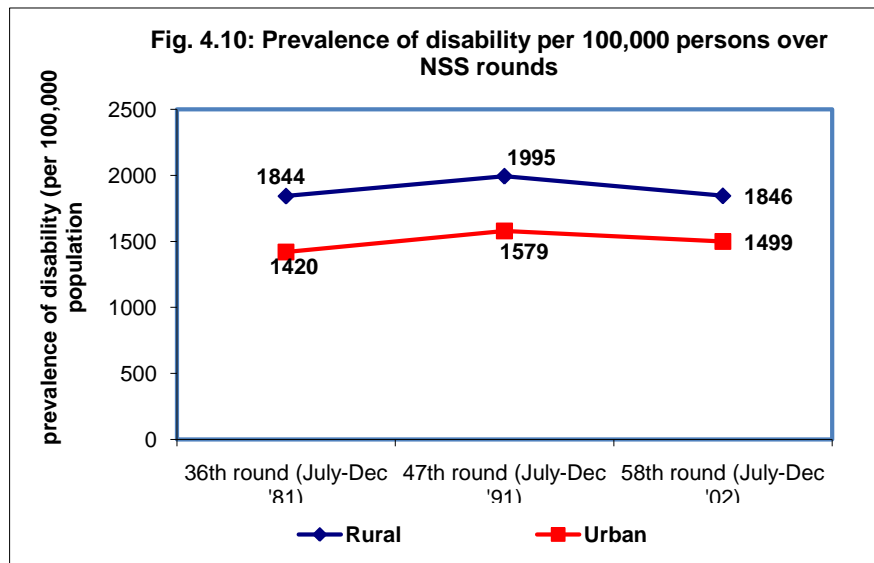
4.11 Prevalence of disability: Comparison over NSS surveys over time

The first comprehensive survey on physical disability was carried out in NSS 36th round (July – December, 1981) and its follow-up survey in NSS 47th round (July – December, 1991). Beginning with 36th round, the concepts, definitions and survey procedures for capturing the physical disability were retained the same in all the surveys on disability including the 58th round. Only the mental disability was included for the first time in the 58th round. It is, therefore, worthwhile to see the changes in the prevalence of disability in the country. However, the age restrictions for the hearing and speech disability were done away with in the 58th round and accordingly the results were not strictly comparable with the previous rounds.

Table 4.11: Prevalence of disabled persons per 100,000 persons obtained from NSS surveys of 36 th , 47 th and 58 th rounds			
sex	36 th round (July-Dec. '81)	47 th round (July-Dec. '91)	58 th round (July-Dec. '02)
rural			
male	2045	2277	2118
female	1632	1694	1556
persons	1844	1995	1846
urban			
male	1532	1774	1670
female	1297	1361	1311
persons	1420	1579	1499

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

Between 1981 (NSS 36th round) and 2002 (58th round), there was no major change in the prevalence of disability, especially in the rural sector; although NSS 47th round (1991) recorded a slightly higher prevalence of disability for both males and females, or rural and urban. In that survey round developmental milestones of children had been surveyed along with disability. In general, in all the survey rounds prevalence of disability was found to be highest (more than 2000 per 100000 population) among rural males and lowest among urban females (about 1300 per 100000 population).



4.12 Age at the onset of any type of disability: NSSO survey (2002)

Some people are born disabled and some acquire disability in course of time. For those who acquired disability after birth, information relating to age at onset of disability was collected. In order to study the pattern of age at the onset of disability, the cohort of persons of age 60 years and above who acquired any type of disability, had been considered and their distribution over age at onset of disability had been studied. In general, about a third of the disabled persons were reported to have onset of disability since birth. Among persons with mental retardation or speech disability acquired the disability more than 80% got it since birth. In contrast, only a small percentage of persons with low vision or blindness (less than 20%) were born with the disability, while others had acquired them at later ages. Among persons with mental illness and those with loco motor or speech disability the proportion of disabled since birth was marginally higher.

Table 4.12: Percentage of persons disabled since birth among the disabled persons by type of disability

type of disability	%persons disabled since birth among disabled persons of age 60 years & above				
	rural	urban	male	female	persons
mental retardation	85	82	83	85	84
mental illness	24	20	23	23	23
blindness	15	17	18	13	16
low vision	8	11	12	6	9
hearing disability	37	37	39	35	37
speech disability	83	76	81	83	82
locomotor disability	29	24	27	29	28
any disability	33	30	33	31	32

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

Age at onset of disability	Mental retardation	Mental illness	Blindness	Low vision	Hearing	Speech	Locomotor
Disability since birth	866	47	18	6	65	356	54
0 – 4	75	0	7	5	6	9	20
5 – 9	0	8	8	4	9	9	16
10 – 14	47	6	8	3	14	13	14
15 – 19	12	13	5	1	6	5	8
20 – 24	0	30	4	2	14	1	13
25 – 29	0	32	5	1	6	1	7
30 – 34	0	40	8	1	16	13	18
35 – 44	0	132	32	11	46	25	55
45 – 59	0	368	233	248	247	198	284
60 & above	0	323	673	717	571	369	511
All age	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

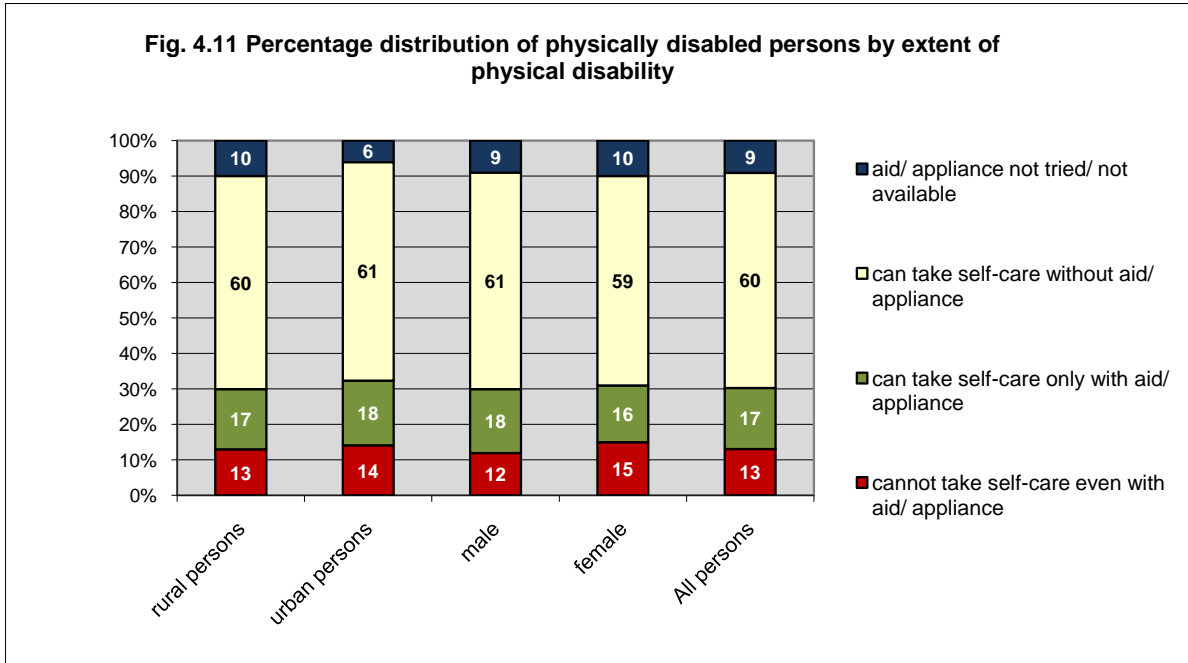
More than 85% of the persons of age 60 years and above suffering from mental retardation were disabled since birth. Almost 36% of the speech disabled persons were disabled since birth. Apart from that, for all other types of disability, the most common age at onset was after 45 years of age. In particular, in case of low vision and blindness, in more than 90% cases, age at onset has been beyond 45 years, and out of them almost for 70%, the disability was acquired after age 60.

4.13 Extent of physical disability: NSSO survey (2002)

For determining the extent of physical disability of a disabled person, self-care, such as, ability to go to latrine, taking food, getting dressed, etc. were taken into account. The disabled persons were classified into one of the four categories, viz., (i) those not able to take self-care even with aid/appliance, (ii) those able to take self-care only with aid/ appliance, (iii) those who can take self care without aid/appliance, (iv) aid/appliance not tried/ not available.

Extent of disability	rural	urban	male	female	all persons
cannot take self-care even with aid/ appliance	13	14	12	15	13
can take self-care only with aid/ appliance	17	18	18	16	17
can take self-care without aid/ appliance	60	61	61	59	60
aid/ appliance not tried/ not available	10	6	9	10	9
Total (incl. non-reporting cases)	100	100	100	100	100

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002



It was found that about 60% could take self-care without aid/appliance and another 17% could take self-care only with aid/appliance and 9% had not tried or aid/appliance or those were not available to them. But 13% of the disabled persons could not take self-care even with the help of aid/appliance and therefore they remain the most critical section of disabled population. Among disabled females the proportion with this severe disability was more (15%) than among disabled males (12%). About 10% of rural disabled persons had not tried aid/appliance or it wasn't available to them as compared to only 6% in the urban. It would however be more interesting to study the pattern age-group-wise.

Almost 80% of the disabled persons were of age 15 years or above and among them also about 13% could not take self-care even with aid/ appliance, 19% could take self-care only with aid/ appliance, 60% could take self-care without aid/ appliance and 9% did not try any aid/ appliance to overcome their difficulties. For those of age 60 years and above, the proportions were different with almost 20% of them not reported to be able to take self-care even with aid/ appliance.

Table 4.15: Number of physically disabled persons by extent of physical disability per 1000 physically disabled persons in each age-group and sex						
age –group (years)	extent of physical disability					per 1000 distribution of disabled persons by age
	can not take self-care even with aid/ appliance	can take self- care only with aid/ appliance	can take self- care without aid/ appliance	aid/ appli- ance not tried/ not available	Total (incl. n.r. cases)	
0 – 4	300	111	404	184	1000	31
5 – 9	159	88	644	106	1000	78
10 – 14	101	113	687	96	1000	100
15 – 19	89	139	695	76	1000	90
20 – 24	86	139	702	71	1000	73
25 – 29	79	132	699	87	1000	56
30 – 34	80	112	728	79	1000	50
35 – 39	80	124	718	75	1000	51
40 – 44	95	159	654	91	1000	46
35 – 44	87	141	688	83	1000	97
45 – 49	111	169	644	76	1000	52
50 – 54	110	178	628	83	1000	47
55 – 59	126	219	573	81	1000	51
45 – 59	115	189	615	80	1000	150
60 & above	193	265	447	93	1000	275
15 & above	128	190	596	84	1000	791
All age	133	172	603	90	1000	1000

Source: NSSO Survey on Disability 2002

n.r.: not reported

4.14 Variation in Disability estimates of NSSO and Census figures on Disability

As per the latest NSSO Disability Survey (July to December 2002) report, the number of disabled persons in the country was estimated to be 18.5 million, who formed about 1.8 per cent of the total population. On the other hand Population Census 2001 found 21.9 million of PWD in India (about 2.13 per cent of total population). The difference in total number as also prevalence of disability can partly be explained by major differences in concepts, definitions, methodology, type of question asked etc. Besides, multiple disabilities also accounted for some differences. About 10.63 per cent of the disabled persons suffered from more than one type of disabilities as revealed by NSSO survey, while collected data on only one type of disability for each disabled person.

The comparative figures on Persons with Disabilities (PWD) based on NSSO 2002 survey (58th round) and Census 2001 are given below:

Table 4.16: Number of physically disabled persons (in 100000) as obtained by the latest NSS Survey on Disability (2002) and those from the Population Census 2001		
Type of Disability	Total number of PWD(in 100000)	
	NSSO Estimate 2002	Census Estimate 2001
Locomotor	106.34	61.05
Visual	28.26	106.35
Hearing	30.62	12.62
Speech	21.55	16.41
Mental	20.96	22.64
Total	184.91	219.07

In terms of the prevalence by individual type of disability, the differences were large between estimates from these two major official sources of disability statistics, especially for locomotor and visual disability. However, it is often argued that, the official disability estimates, obtained from either Population Census or dedicated NSS surveys on the subject can at best be considered to be reliable estimates of severe disabilities only. This is because, both the methods rely more on traditional diagnostic identification of disability, rather than the functional disability consideration. Typically, the elderly population, large number of whom may be functionally disabled, are usually not identified so by the households and therefore not reported as disabled in any household level enquiry, the way the disability questions are asked. There are other socio-cultural reasons including social stigma attached to disability which may account for low reporting of cases. Even the 11th five-year Plan document had noted that, “it can be reasonably argued that persons with disabilities constitute anywhere between 5 to 6 per cent of our total population”. Thus, the official estimates can be considered as the lower bound estimates with a strong bias towards more serious disabilities only.